

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 NIC-01 SAM-01 IO-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5834

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 5824

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MY

SUBJ: MALAY STUDENT CONFRONTATION OF

GOM CONTINUES; AN APPRAISAL

REF: A. KL 5754

B. KL 5728

C. KL 5702

D. KL 5676

1. SUMMARY: THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MALAY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
IN KL AND THE GOVT CONTINUED THROUGH DEC 6 WITH VIOLENT CLASHES
AT THE TWO CAMPUSES IN WHICH STUDENTS HAVE BEEN CONFINED. THE
PRIME MINISTER TOLD RULING PARTY (UMNO) LEADERS THAT THE DEMON-
STRATIONS WERE INSTIGATED BY OPPOSITIONISTS WHO FAILED IN THE
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PAST ELECTION, CLAIMED THAT THE ISSUE OF STARVATION IN THE

NORTHERN STATE OF KEDAH WAS A FALSE ONE, AND ASSERTED THAT HE WOULD NOT ALLOW MALAYSIAN DEMOCRACY BE USED TO DESTROY THE GOVT. THE GOM OBVIOUSLY HAVING UNDERESTIMATED STUDENT DISILLUSIONMENT UNEXPECTEDLY FINDS ITSELF AT ODDS WITH THE VERY GROUP IT HAS NURTURED TO BECOME THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THE NATION. THIS GROUP, THE MALAY STUDENTS, ALTHOUGH LED BY EXTREMISTS, SEEMS GENUINELY DISILLUSIONED WITH WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS THE CORRUPTION AND SOCIAL INDIFFERENCE OF THE GOVT. THE SPECTRE OF RACIAL VIOLENCE HAS NOT BEEN RAISED AS YET, BUT CONTINUED VIOLENT CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE AND STUDENTS COULD LEAD TO MORE GENERAL CIVIL DISORDER UNLESS THE GOVT FINDS A SOLUTION SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MAINLY MALAY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THE GOM COMPLETED ITS FOURTH DAY DEC 6 WITH RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA (UM) AND NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (U. KEBANGSSAN--UK) STRUGGLING TO BREAK THROUGH POLICE CORDONS WHICH HAVE KEPT THEM ON THEIR CONTIGUOUS CAMPUSES ON THE BORDER BETWEEN KL AND ITS SUBURB OF PETALING JAYA (PJ) SINCE WEDNESDAY MORNING. LATEST VIOLENT SURGE OCCURRED AT SUNDOWN FRIDAY WITH STUDENTS PELTING POLICE WITH ROCKS, BOTTLES AND BALL BEARINGS FROM SLING SHOTS WHILE LATTER FIRED ROUND AFTER ROUND OF TEAR GAS. EFFECT OF CONFLICT WAS TO CREATE MONUMENTAL TRAFFIC JAM AS MAIN HIGHWAY BETWEEN KL AND PJ PASSES ALONG EDGE OF BOTH CAMPUSES. NO SERIOUS CASUALTIES WERE REPORTED. OBJECTIVE OF STUDENTS WAS TO CARRY THEIR PROTEST TO CENTER OF KL AS THEY DID TUESDAY WHEN OVER ONE THOUSAND WERE ARRESTED AND LATER RELEASED ON BAIL. SMALLER DEMONSTRATIONS ALSO CONTINUED FRIDAY ON CAMPUSES OF MARA AND NATIONAL TECHNICAL INSTITUTES (ITM AND ITK) IN KL, AT AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY (UP) IN NEARBY SERDANG, AND AT UNIVERSITI SAINS IN PENANG, BUT THESE REPORTEDLY WERE PEACEFUL. ON FRIDAY MORNING A REPORTED 2,000 UM STUDENTS MET WITH THE VICE CHANCELLOR, UNGKU AZIZ, TO DEMAND THE RECALL OF THE KEDAH CHIEF MINISTER AND POSTPONEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS (SCHEDULED FROM DEC 18 THROUGH FIRST WEEK JANUARY) "BECAUSE THEY MISSED LECTURES THIS WEEK".

3. ON GOVT SIDE, PRIME MINISTER RAZAK, ADDRESSING SPECIAL MEETING OF 700 UMNO LEADERS, BLAMED SMALL GROUP OF DISAPPOINTED OPPOSITION ELEMENTS AND STUDENT RADICALS FOR ORGANIZING

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EARLIER PROTESTS BY RUBBER TAPPERS AND SMALLHOLDERS IN BALING, KEDAH (REF D) IN ORDER OVERTHROW GOVT THEY COULD NOT DEFEAT IN ELECTIONS. THE TUN DENIED THAT THERE WAS "STARVATION" IN AREAS OF KEDAH AND ELSEWHERE AS ASSERTED BY STUDENTS AND SAID THAT THEY WERE ALLOWING THEMSELVES TO BE USED AS TOOLS OF "ANTI-NATIONAL ELEMENTS". "THE GOVT," HE ASSERTED, "WILL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION AGAINST THOSE WHO WANT TO USE DEMOCRACY TO DESTROY IT." THUS THE GOM FINDS

ITSELF SQUARED OFF NOT AGAINST CHINESE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS OR OTHER ALIEN GROUPS BUT AGAINST THE VERY MALAY YOUNG PEOPLE WHO IT HAS GIVEN PREFERENCE TO AND WHO IT HOPES WILL RULE THE NATION IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. A PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF THE DIFFERENT FACTORS AT WORK IN THIS CRISIS FOLLOWS.

4. THE BALING INCIDENT REPORTEDLY ORIGINATED WHEN VILLAGERS DEPENDENT UPON RUBBER TAPPING REQUESTED HELP FROM STATE GOVERNMENT. WHETHER STARVING OR NOT, THEY ARE VERY POOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT BETWEEN THE 18 PERCENT INFLATION OF THE PAST YEAR AND THE FALLING PRICE OF RUBBER. AN UNRESPONSIVE REPLY BY THE KEDAH CHIEF MINISTER FILTERED THROUGH TO STUDENTS FROM THE AREA IN KL AND PENANG WHO CONSULTED RADICAL STUDENT LEADERS AND YOUNG LECTURERS AFFILIATED WITH THE LEFT-WING PARTAI SOSIALIS RAKYAT MALAYSIA (SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S PARTY OR PSRM). SINCE IT WAS VACATION TIME (CLASSES RESUMED DEC 2), SEVERAL OF THE STUDENTS AND LECTURERS WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL TO THE SCENE AND TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN THE PROTESTS OF THE VILLAGERS. RECENT ACTIONS OF THE GOVT TO BOOST THE PRICE OF RUBBER (KL 5678) APPEAR TO HAVE HELPED THE VILLAGERS SOMEWHAT, BUT THE REFUSAL OF THE CHIEF MINISTER TO TAKE ACTION CONTINUES TO SERVE AS A FOCAL POINT FOR MALAY STUDENT ANGER THAT HAS BEEN BUILDING FOR OVER A YEAR.

5. ANTI-US AND ANTI-ISRAEL DEMONSTRATIONS BY MALAY STUDENTS IN OCTOBER 1973 MARKED A WATERSHED IN MALAYSIAN STUDENT ACTIVISM. THE OCTOBER WAR PROVIDED A CAUSE WHICH THE GOVT COULD NOT STRONGLY OPPOSE AND TAUGHT CAMPUS AND YOUTH LEADERS THAT THEY COULD MULTIPLY THEIR LEVERAGE BY EFFECTIVE COOPERATION IF THE ISSUES WERE BROAD ENOUGH. ALTHOUGH RADICAL AND COMMUNIST-INFILTRATED ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE UM SOCIALIST CLUB AND CHINESE LANGUAGE SOCIETY HAD LONG AGO SOUGHT CONSENSUS ON IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES (THE SOCIALISTS CAPTURED THE UM

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STUDENT COUNCIL TWO YEARS AGO), THEIR POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS WAS LIMITED UNTIL JOINED BY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE MALAYSIAN ISLAMIC YOUTH FRONT (ANGKATAN BELIA ISLAM MALAYSIA OR ABIM) AND THE NATIONAL UNION OF MALAYSIAN ISLAMIC STUDENTS (PERSATUAN KEBANGSAAN PELAJAR ISLAM MALAYSIA OR PKPIM) WHICH APPEAL TO THE STRONG RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IDEALISM OF MALAY STUDENTS. IN FACT, PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IN THE STUDENT-YOUTH SCENE IN THE PAST TWO YEARS OR SO HAS BEEN THE EMERGENCE, PROMINENCE AND MILITANCY OF THESE RELIGION-BASED ORGANIZATIONS LED BY FIRE BRANDS SUCH AS ANWAR IBRAHIM DESCRIBING THEMSELVES AS "ISLAMIC SOCIALISTS".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 5824

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

6. THE LEADERSHIP OF ALL THESE GROUPS COULD AGREE ON ISSUES OF "SOCIAL JUSTICE" SUCH AS THE DEFENSE OF SQUATTERS IN JOHORE AND AID FOR THE "STARVING" VILLAGERS OF KEDAH EVEN THOUGH THEIR IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS, PARTICULARLY ON RELIGION, DIFFERED CONSIDERABLY. IN THIS WAY, THEY RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM MANY NON-IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED MALAY STUDENTS REPELLED BY INCREASING EVIDENCE OF CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES, PARTICULARLY AMONG MALAY LEADERS SUCH AS DATO HARUN IDRIS, THE CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR. IRRITATION WITH THE GOVT OVER ITS INSENSITIVITY TO THE PLIGHT OF THE VILLAGES FROM WHICH MANY STUDENTS COME, AND OVER REPEATED BUNGLING IN THE HANDLING OF MANY ISSUES OF DIRECT IMPORTANCE TO THE STUDENTS CONCERNING SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION, AS WELL AS A BELIEF IN THE OFTEN REPEATED SLOGAN THAT MALAYSIA IS FOR THE MALAYS, NOT FOR JUST ONE OR TWO WEALTHY MALAYS, HAS SERVED TO INCREASE DIS-

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ILLUSIONMENT AMONG STUDENTS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE REMAIN PASSIVE. INCREASING CONFLICT WITH THE STUDENTS, IN TURN, HAS ALIENATED THE GOVT CLOSING TRADITIONAL LINES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE TWO.

7. COMMENT: THE SITUATION HERE SHOULD NOT BE STRANGE TO AMERICANS FAMILIAR WITH STUDENT DISORDERS IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO RIGHT ITSELF IN TIME. HERE, THE STUDENT CRISIS IS MUCH MORE DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT OCCURS AGAINST A HISTORICAL BACKDROP OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND INSURGENCY. MANY MALAYSIANS FEAR THAT DESPITE THEIR COUNTRY'S RELATIVE PROSPERITY THE WORLD ECONOMIC RECESSION WILL LAST FOR MANY MONTHS AND SITUATIONS SUCH AS OCCURRED IN KEDAH WILL PROLIFERATE. THE UMNO LEADERS REPORTEDLY AGREED IN THEIR CLOSED AFTERNOON SESSION YESTERDAY THAT THE SITUATION IS DANGEROUS AND RESOLVED TO IMMEDIATELY SEEK CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN RURAL PARTY BRANCHES AND THE VILLAGERS BOTH TO EXPLAIN THE GOVT'S MEASURES AND TO FORESTALL A REPETITION OF THE BALING INCIDENT BY KEEPING LOCAL OFFICIALS ON THEIR TOES. THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE CONSIDERED COMPROMISING WITH THE STUDENTS, HOWEVER, BUT RATHER TO CONTINUE TO BLOCK THEM IN THEIR EFFORTS TO FORCE CONCESSIONS AND GAIN RECOGNITION. IT IS APPARENTLY HOPED THAT THE DETENTION OF AT LEAST SOME OF THE RADICAL STUDENT LEADERS (ANWAR IBRAHIM SEEMS STILL TO BE DETAINED BUT HISHAMUDDIN RAIS OF THE SOCIALISTS REPORTEDLY WAS SEEN AT THE BARRICADES FRIDAY EVENING) PLUS CONTINUING PRESSURE FROM THE POLICE WILL TIRE THE STUDENTS OUT. ONE HOPES THAT THIS IS CORRECT SINCE CONTINUED DEMONSTRATIONS COULD LEAD TO MORE SERIOUS CLASHES WITH THE POLICE, WORSE INJURIES TO THE STUDENTS AND ALIENATION OF MALAY PARENTS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE GOM WHO SEEM UP TO NOW TO DISAPPROVE OF THEIR OFF-SPRINGS' ACTIVISM. FORTUNATELY, AT THIS POINT THE RACIAL ISSUE SEEMS TO BE COMPLETELY ABSENT AND THE CONFRONTATION REMAINS ONE BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE MALAY LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, THERE IS A RISK THAT THE DEMONSTRATIONS COULD LEAD TO WIDESPREAD CIVIC DISORDER AND IT SEEMS IMPERATIVE, THEREFORE, THAT THE GOVT FIND A CARROT TO GO WITH ITS WHIP.

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